

DISASTER IN THE DAKOTAS

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I came to the floor to visit about a very important issue, the issue of the chemical weapons treaty and the requirement the Senate vote on that treaty. But before I do that, I want to tell my colleagues of a circumstance that exists in our part of the country that they have no doubt seen and heard on the television and radio and that is the worst blizzard we have seen in some 50 years in North Dakota on top of a flooding condition that was already existing that looks to be a 100-year flood.

Last evening, I and my colleagues from North and South Dakota went to see President Clinton in the White House along with the head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to discuss the emergency that exists in our part of the country.

The President has made a disaster declaration. He has signed it. There is now a team of people from FEMA in the Dakotas beginning to work, beginning to marshal equipment from around the country—generators, snow removal equipment, and a whole range of things that will be necessary to deal with this crisis.

I want to tell my colleagues of the kind of crisis that exists. Again, we had a blizzard that in many parts of North Dakota gave us 15, 18, and 20 inches of snowfall on top of a circumstance that already existed that would have provided us and will provide us with a flood that is a 100-year event. So this is an enormously difficult time for North Dakotans. We have had the spectacle of people actually sandbagging in the middle of a blizzard, which is a very unusual event. Normally you fight a flood or normally you fight to survive a blizzard, but we have had the confluence of two events that is enormously difficult. We have substantial livestock death. We have reports of people missing entire livestock herds. The stories of people helping one another in coping this past weekend are compelling and gripping, of courage, neighbor helping neighbor. It is a very tough time in the Dakotas.

My colleagues and I will likely be going back out—we just came back—with the senior team which the President will send. He intends James Lee Witt and I believe at least one other Cabinet Secretary and some others as part of a senior team from the administration to go out and to survey the damage and to begin the active work of supervising the people who are already on the ground.

This is as tough a time as anything I have ever seen in the Dakotas. Most North Dakotans tell me it is the toughest winter they have ever seen. The blizzard this weekend, as I indicated, is the toughest we have had in 50 years in North Dakota, and it came on top of five or six successive blizzards in North Dakota that essentially shut down our State on five or six occasions previously. As of Saturday evening, this past Saturday evening, in North Da-

kota traffic was stopped in virtually every direction on every road. It was a very difficult time and remains a very difficult time with thousands of North Dakotans still without electricity after many days. This is a crisis which will continue to exist because of the flooding which has not yet crested in many parts, especially of the Red River.

I thank President Clinton; I thank James Lee Witt, the head of FEMA; I thank our colleagues, Republicans and Democrats, who join together in times like this to extend a helping hand to people who need help and who are fighting their way through a crisis that is very difficult to deal with.

THE BUDGET

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I would like to mention two additional items very quickly. One is an issue that has just been discussed at some length on the floor about a budget and tax relief. My hope is that we will find a way to have a bipartisan compromise on a budget. The law requires that by April 15 a budget be enacted by this Congress. It is clear now that the Congress will miss that date. But the date is less important than the result. The result ought to be a budget that achieves balance so we are not spending our children's money, often on things we do not need.

We ought to decide that there is as much energy in this Chamber to balance the budget as there was to change the Constitution of the United States. I said during the debate on the constitutional provision that was offered here that you could change the Constitution now, and 2 minutes from now you would not have altered the deficit by one penny. What will alter the budget deficit and eventually eliminate the budget deficit will be individual spending and taxing decisions inside the budget by Members of the U.S. Senate and U.S. House. I think it is past the time in which the President and Members of Congress, Republicans and Democrats, join together to say here is where we ought to head and here is the road map by which we get there, to establish balance.

I have cast hard votes and tough votes. In 1993 I cast an awfully tough vote. We have reduced the budget deficit by 60 percent in the last 4 years. If we continue down that road, we can eliminate the Federal budget deficit, and we should. I am willing to cast more tough votes, and I hope very much we can decide this is not a partisan issue but rather a shared issue for Republicans and Democrats who decide that there is merit and virtue in balancing this Federal budget and not charging what we are now spending to our kids and grandkids.

CHEMICAL WEAPONS TREATY

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I came to the floor to speak about another issue that is very important this week

as well. This week the Senate comes back from a 2-week break and turns to the question of nuclear waste. That is an important issue and one I hope this Congress and the President will address seriously and solve. But there is another issue that is very important that has a deadline that we must address, and that is the issue of the chemical weapons treaty.

We now have a circumstance in which this country, with 160 other countries, has signed a convention in which a chemical weapons treaty to the Geneva Disarmament Conference in 1994 was negotiated and completed. It was initiated by President Bush, supported by President Reagan, it was continued under President Clinton and submitted to the U.S. Senate for ratification.

The chemical weapons treaty will restrain the proliferation and will reduce the threat of the use of chemical weapons in our lifetime. It is the first ever treaty to try to ban an entire class of weapons of mass destruction. Never again should men and women in our lifetime face a weapon of mass destruction called a chemical weapon or poison gas. We have a treaty that has now been signed by 70 nations, more than the 65 that is needed to ratify the treaty, so it will go into effect on April 29 of this year. This country has not yet ratified it. Our key allies, Australia, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, and others, have already ratified this treaty, and we need to do so and we need to do so by April 29.

There are opponents of this who say, "No, this is not a perfect treaty." And it is not. Opponents say, "If we adopt this treaty, Saddam Hussein is not going to adopt the treaty, so what are we doing here?" Because some will commit murder, do we not want to make murder a crime in America? We understand there are some who may not want to abide by this treaty. This country has already made a decision, in the mid-1980's, that we are going to destroy our stockpile of chemical weapons. We have already made that decision. We made a decision under President Bush and continued it under President Clinton to negotiate a chemical weapons treaty. That treaty was negotiated. Seventy nations have now ratified it, and we have not yet done so, and we should. Ratifying it will strengthen this country, not weaken this country. Those who allege that ratifying the chemical weapons treaty will somehow weaken this country's hand, in my judgment, are wrong. I respect their opinion, but they are wrong. It is urgent and necessary that we, by April 29, ratify this treaty. We are able, with our allies, to provide leadership to destroy an entire class of weapons of mass destruction in our society. If we do not take this opportunity to do it, we will have made a very grave mistake.

I was not here when we were testing nuclear weapons in massive quantity, but I know when it was proposed that